

~THE SECOND~ COMING *of* CHRIST

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The Second Coming of Christ

A MESSAGE FOR THE TIMES

BY
JAMES M. CAMPBELL



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FOREWORD

THE subject of the second coming of Christ is at the present time being pushed into the forefront of the world's thought by the portentous events happening on European battlefields, and by the equally portentous changes looming up in the industrial, social, and political worlds. Many in their sore perplexity are raising the question whether the startling things now taking place may not presage the speedy coming of Christ to roll back the forces of evil, and to establish his kingdom. Upon that background of questioning the following pages have been written.

The hope of the second coming of Christ, which the events of recent years have so greatly intensified, has persisted throughout the Christian centuries. Naturally enough, it took much of its coloring, at the first, from the religion

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of Judaism, out of which Christianity grew. It was expected to take place in a visible, spectacular fashion; but in the course of time, as Christianity became spiritualized, it was transmuted into a spiritual event. The imagery in which it is set forth in the New Testament was borrowed from the Jewish apocalyptic sources, from the later prophets, and especially from the book of Daniel, and is to be explained in harmony with the highly dramatic and symbolical character of these writings.

It was in perfect keeping with their way of looking at things that the first Christians should expect to see the forces of evil destroyed, and the kingdom of righteousness set up by the brightness of the Lord's appearing. They doubtless kept saying, as many are doing to-day, "Everything will be set right when the Lord comes." That this attitude of eager expectancy and unshaken hope ought, in its essence at least, to be recaptured by the church of

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to-day, goes without the saying. Those who expect most from Christ in the future honor him most, and occupy the surest ground. Upon his mighty arm we cannot lean too heavily; upon the certainty of his final victory we cannot count too confidently. What he has already done is only a hint of what he is able to do. We are at the beginning and not at the end of his power. When his reserves are called up, and the great offensive is on, the world will wonder at the result.

The desire for outward demonstration of what is spiritual and invisible is a natural one. Men have always passionately prayed to a God who seems to be concealing himself, "O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down." They have always sought outward tokens of unseen realities. We see this desire for a sign expressed in spiritism, which cries for "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still"—not being content with

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the touch of a spirit-hand and the sound of a spirit-voice. To sense-bound souls the outward and tangible alone are satisfying, but to a spiritually developed Christian the invisible is as real as the visible. If signs and wonders come, he accepts them as confirmatory of his faith, but he is independent of them. He walks by faith and not by outward demonstration.

But perhaps the main cause for the persistence of this hope is to be traced to the desire to find a short cut to the millennium. This too is natural. The progress of human development is painfully slow, and we want to see things hurried up. In times of darkness and disaster such as these through which we are now passing the desire for the speedy ending of an appalling situation is specially strong. As a matter of fact, changes often come with startling suddenness. In human affairs progress is attained by revolution as well as by evolution, by crisis as well as by gradual

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growth. Generally, the kingdom of heaven is like leaven, but there are times when it is like dynamite. Judgment has its place in Christ's plan of world conquest. He comes in strange and unexpected ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are his ways our ways; and he may take us by surprise alike as to the time of his coming and as to the manner of it. "For in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh"; and in such a way as ye think not the Son of man cometh. The spiritual forces which he is now operating in the unseen realm are bound to become more and more apparent, until at length he can show himself in such a way that the whole world shall be brought to acknowledge his authority and to crown him Lord of all. For such a consummation we are to wait, and watch, and work, unceasingly.

The only source of knowledge on the subject of Christ's second coming is the Word of God. To its pages we turn,

FOREWORD

endeavoring to maintain a spirit of open-mindedness, and readiness to accept its teachings in their plain and obvious meaning. With regard to no other subject is there greater need for dogmatic modesty, and for the exercise of tolerance toward those who do not see with us eye to eye. At the best "we know in part, and we prophesy in part." We need each other's help. Controversy is hurtful; friendly discussion is helpful. "Truth is a torch; the more 'tis shook it shines."

Into this booklet has been condensed the result of years of patient, prayerful brooding; and the hope is cherished that it may prove to many bewildered souls a rift in the clouds revealing a shining pathway of hope upon which a discouraged church may march to victory under the inspiring leadership of her living, present, and conquering Lord.

PART I

**THE NEW TESTAMENT
TEACHING REGARDING
THE SECOND ADVENT**

“I came.”—John 10. 10.

“I go away.”—John 14. 28.

“Lo, I am with you always.”—Matt. 28. 20.

“I am (He) who is to come.”—Rev. 1. 8.

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, *these* shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come.”
(John 16. 12, 13.)

CHAPTER I

“THE COMING ONE”

WHEN John the Baptist, in the prison, heard of the works of Jesus, he sent two of his disciples to him to ask: “Art thou he that cometh” (or, more literally, “the coming One”), “or look we for another?” (Luke 7. 19). That is, “Art thou the one promised of old, the one for whom we have been looking, the one who cometh to fulfill our Messianic hopes?” The same question is being asked in another form to-day. If before his first advent Jesus was the object of expectation, how much more so now! Having showed, during his brief sojourn here, what he could do for humanity, human hope has centered on him more than ever. He is to us, to all, “the coming one,” the one to whom we

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

instinctively look as the bringer in of redemption.

In the book of Revelation our Lord announces himself as the one "who was and who is and who is to come" (4. 8). He is the Christ of the past, the Christ of the present, and the Christ of the future; the Christ who came, who is here, and who is yet to come. A complete vision of Christ in relation to time must include these three separate views.

As the one "who was," he is *the Christ of history*. His coming into the world was a definite event. He came into it as we all come into it, by the gate of birth. To those only who knew him after the flesh did he become a precious memory; to all others he has been the central figure in history. They have known of him from the testimony of eyewitnesses, but that testimony has been abundantly substantiated by the changes which his coming has wrought in every department of the world's life.

As the one "who is," he is *the Christ*

“THE COMING ONE”

of experience. This is how we know him to-day. That he is here is proved by the fact that we have met him, and have had personal dealings with him. In the experience of his people his parting declaration, “Lo, I am with you always,” has been abundantly verified. The fact of his presence is the essential thing in personal religion, as it is also the central thing in Christian faith. It binds into a harmonious whole the past, the present, and the future. The Christ who came, the Christ who is here, and the Christ who is yet to come are seen to be one.

As the one “who is to come” he is *the Christ of hope*. In him the future of the world is bound up. Dr. David Smith aptly says, “History is nothing but a succession of his comings.” With regard to his complete supremacy in the future all Christian believers are agreed. They may differ in their opinions as to how he is to fulfill the hopes which the sons of men have built upon his name,

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but they agree in centering their expectation upon him, and upon him alone. We feel sure that he is not yet through with us, or with the world, and that his possibilities are very far from being exhausted. In all his past and present comings we rejoice; to his future comings we look forward with glad expectancy, as the happy bride looks forward to the coming of the bridegroom; exclaiming with hearts elate:

“He is coming, O my spirit, with his everlasting peace;

With his blessedness immortal and complete.

He is coming, O my spirit, and his coming brings release,

I listen for the coming of his feet.”

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST COMING OF CHRIST, OR HIS COMING IN THE FLESH

HIS coming in the flesh is a clearly attested fact. Nothing in all history stands upon a firmer foundation. Although but scantily recognized by the great ones of the earth, it was the greatest event of all time—the sunrise hour from which the new day of hope began to dawn; and never will the children of men cease to celebrate it in song, declaring,

“He has come, the Christ of God,
Left for us his glad abode;
Stooping from his throne of bliss
To this darksome wilderness,
He has come, the Prince of Peace;
Come to bid our sorrows cease,
Come to scatter with his light
All the shadows of our night.”

CHAPTER III

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, OR THE GREAT RE- VISITATION

PAUL refers to the change from the physical to the spiritual Christ in the words: "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know *him so no more*" (2 Cor. 5. 16). There are many to-day who have not advanced to this ground. The only Christ they know is a Christ who is still clothed in the body which he wore when on earth; and all their hope for the future is fixed upon his literal, physical return and re-appearing. Such a view violates the principle of development, empties his resurrection of all significance as the archetype of ours, and gives us a Christ whose ascent into the life of the spirit is at best but half accomplished.

THE SECOND COMING

The belief in a spiritual Christ who has transcended the limitations of the flesh, into which the first disciples were brought under the tuition of the Holy Spirit, is one in which successive generations have lived and died; and just in the measure in which it has taken hold of the Christian heart has that conquering power been captured which characterized the early church.

CHAPTER IV

WITH WHAT EVENT DID THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST SYNCHRONIZE?

WITH “the end of the *world*”? No, but with “the end of the *age*.” What needless confusion of thought would have been avoided if our translators had been careful to preserve the difference in meaning between the Greek words *aion* and *kosmos*. The former means age, and nothing but age; the latter means the outward world in which we dwell, and nothing else; and yet they are both alike rendered by the term “world”; their correct meaning being put in the margin. It was the former word that was used in the question of the disciples to the Master, “What *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matt. 24. 3.) A literal

A QUESTION

rendering would be, "What shall be the sign of thy presence and the consummation of the age?" The disciples were not thinking at all of the end of the world, but of the end of their own age, which was fast running to its close; and they wanted to know by what signs they would be able to tell when its end was upon them.

By not observing the difference in the meaning of the two words *aion* and *kosmos*, many readers of the New Testament have been unnecessarily disturbed; and not a few have had their faith irretrievably shattered. They have reasoned that if Jesus predicted the end of the world as near at hand, he was a false prophet, for this old world continues to spin through space. All the difficulty is at once cleared away when it is seen that what Jesus foretold was not the speedy and dramatic ending of the world, but the speedy and dramatic ending of the Jewish age.

But what about the Christian age now

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current? Is it waxing old, or is it "but a child still in its go-cart"? Who can tell? Because of the uncertainty of the future, needful as ever is the admonition: "Watch therefore; for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh" (Matt. 24. 42). For although these words of warning had reference to a specific event, they are susceptible of a wider application, and have their lesson to us to-day. Because of the uncertainty of the future, we should always, as Saint Jerome reminds us, be standing with our lamps alit listening for the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

CHAPTER V

WHEN DID HE COME?

THIS is a difficult question to answer categorically, for the reason that his coming was both spiritual and epochal. As a spiritual event it was not verifiable by the senses; as an epochal event it was like the gradual emergence of the sun from a cloud-bank by which its presence had been temporarily eclipsed. Yet it had its focal point, and that point was Pentecost. Hence we are abundantly justified in saying that Christ came at Pentecost, inasmuch as his coming was then outwardly expressed and confirmed; and for the further reason that after Pentecost the disciples came to experience a consciousness of his presence which they never afterwards altogether lost.

But, be it carefully noted that *the*

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second coming of Christ while coincident with the coming of the Holy Spirit was not identical with it. Much confusion of thought has arisen from not distinguishing between them. The Holy Spirit is not a substitute for Christ, but is the agent by whom he is made real in human experience.

Nothing must be allowed to becloud or weaken the fact that it is Christ himself, the same Christ whom the disciples knew, the same Christ who vanished from sight, who has returned, and is ever with us.

CHAPTER VI

FOR WHAT ENDS DID HE COME?

1. HE CAME FOR JUDGMENT

HE is described as coming "in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel" (2 Thess. 1. 7, 8). His judgments were to culminate in a great event which is spoken of as "that great and terrible day of the Lord." In Christ's day that judgment is within a lifetime or generation; in the Epistles it is at hand; in the Apocalypse it is come; or, rather, it is "about to come"—the storm-cloud being represented as rolling up, and about to break in a deluge of doom. Its breaking is a matter of history.

But the judgment at the end of the

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Jewish age did not exhaust Christ's judgment-work. Another and greater judgment is to take place at the end of the Christian age—the age in which we are now living; when the judgment process now going on shall culminate in a crisis, and the life of man and of the world alike shall end in a harvest time in which the fruitage of all past sowing shall be ingathered.

Regarding that final judgment it is said that God “hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17. 31). “We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad” (2 Cor. 5. 10). “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment” (Heb. 9. 27). “And I saw a great white throne,

FOR WHAT ENDS DID HE COME?

and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20. 11, 12). To this wider vision of Christ's work of judgment the thought of the early Christians naturally turned as the judgment connected with his second coming receded into the past; and upon it the whole race of man has come to fix its forward gaze.

The judgment of Christ is not, however, to be pushed entirely into the future. "Now is the judgment of this world," and its judgment is being carried on by Christ. He is now "sifting out the souls of men before his judgment-seat." His standard of ethics is being accepted by men and nations as

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the supreme test of conduct. From his judgment there is no escape, and from his verdict there is no appeal. When his judgment falls, the longest arrears have to be paid up. It was this reflection that led Abraham Lincoln to say, in his second inaugural address: "Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that the mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continues until the wealth piled up by the bondsmen's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still must it be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' " Sooner or later every man and every nation has Christ to settle with.

2. HE CAME FOR SALVATION

The only instance in the New Testament in which the return of Christ is

FOR WHAT ENDS DID HE COME?

spoken of as a *second* coming is in Hebrews 9. 28, and nowhere else is the nature and end of that event more clearly defined. The text runs thus: "Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, . . . unto salvation." The second coming as here set forth is (1) "*Apart from sin.*" At his first coming Jesus came "with sin *on* him not *in* him." (So Alford.) He was hailed as "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." At his second coming he was no longer the world's sin-bearer; for having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself he became, in a true sense, separated from it forever.

(2) It is "*unto salvation.*" The Sin-bearer has become the Saviour. His saving power is now in exercise; his saving work is now going on. The work of salvation, for which the ground was laid during the first advent, is now being brought to realization in the lives of

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men. Having "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever," he is now seated "on the right hand of God; henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet" (Heb. 10. 12, 13)—his expectation of complete dominion being based upon his confidence in the efficacy of his atoning sacrifice, and the faithfulness of his people in using it, as the weapon of world conquest.

(3) It is something realized by "*those who wait for him.*" To those who are longing to find him and "love his appearing" he ever reveals himself. He comes to them, not in the clouds descending, but in the impact of his spiritual presence. And whenever he comes, whether it be to a waiting world, to a waiting church, or to a waiting soul, he comes as the bringer of salvation. His coming is like the coming of a lifeboat to shipwrecked mariners. When seeking souls and a seeking Saviour meet, wonderful things happen.

CHAPTER VII

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST IN THE SYNOP- TICAL GOSPELS

THE first three Gospels are called the "synoptical" Gospels, because, as the word indicates, their writers "see together," and are in substantial agreement. The Fourth Gospel occupies a different standpoint, and is in a class by itself. These three Gospels report the eschatological discourses of Jesus, and were evidently written before the overthrow of Jerusalem. In them Jesus "becomes his own prophet," and tells of the fast approaching judgments by which his spiritual kingdom was to be ushered in. Malachi, whose book closes the Old Testament canon, utters the prophecy, "The Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple" (3.

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1). John the Baptist inaugurates the new dispensation with the clarion call, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3. 1). Jesus begins his ministry by "preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4. 23); and by sending forth his apostles to reecho the words of John (Matt. 10. 7), giving them the assurance, "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matt. 10. 23). Nothing could be clearer than that he regarded the coming of his kingdom as imminent.

One of the saddest things in all history was the failure of God's ancient people to recognize their Messiah when he came. "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not." He walked their streets, he taught in their synagogues, he healed their sick, he wore out his life on their behalf, but he failed to win their homage. As their Messiah and King they definitely rejected him. Because of this

IN THE SYNOPTICAL GOSPELS

suicidal act, desolating judgments were to fall upon them, which are compared to siderial disturbances in which "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Matt. 24. 29). To those familiar with Jewish apocalyptic literature these highly colored metaphors present no difficulty.

A striking example of their use is found in the words: "Behold, the sun and moon and eleven stars made obeisance to me" (Gen. 37. 9), in which Joseph described his dream. Who is foolish enough to suppose that the heavenly bodies literally bowed down to him? Good old Jacob knew better; and replied: "Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee?" Compare with Joseph's words those of Jesus, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars

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shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven" (Matt. 24. 29, 30), and there is no difficulty whatever in applying them to the destruction of Jerusalem. They belong to the language of poetical symbolism, and are to be interpreted in the common-sense way in which Jacob interpreted the words of his precocious son. They are without doubt descriptive of the violent social, political, and religious changes which were to take place when Christ returned for judgment.

At the first Jesus dealt in veiled allusions, but in the parable of the wicked husbandmen, which is reported by all the synoptists, he directly charges the Jewish people with infidelity to their high trust, and declares, "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21. 43).

IN THE SYNOPTICAL GOSPELS

As the great catastrophe approached, his descriptions of the dire calamities about to overtake them became more and more definite; and when at last the die was cast and the storm was about to break, he uttered the pathetic lamentation: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23. 37-39). That these judgments were to happen not in the distant future but in the immediate present is put beyond all questioning by the declaration, "Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation" (Matt. 23. 36). But what has been sometimes overlooked is the fact that connected with these judg-

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ments was the blessed hope of the Lord's immediate return.

In the parable which follows, Jesus makes the light of hope to shine on the background of judgment. "Behold," he says, "the fig tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth, ye see it and know of your own selves that the summer is now nigh. Even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh" (Luke 21. 29-31).

The Gospel of Matthew closes with a triad of parables in which the eschatological teaching of Jesus is summed up. The parable of the ten virgins sharpens its teachings to a single point, and counsels the followers of Christ that in the time of agonizing suspense before them—a time that might be called the midnight of the church—they would need to curb their impatience, and practice watchful waiting. The application of the parable is: "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour" (Matt.

IN THE SYNOPTICAL GOSPELS

25. 13). Again and again is the warning in substance repeated, "Be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24. 44). To apply these words to death, as is generally done, is to wrest them from their original purpose, which was to set forth the need of constant preparedness in view of the uncertainty touching the exact moment of Christ's return.

The parable of the talents evidently refers to the Jewish people, God's "own servants," to whom were committed the oracles of God, and to whom were given great privileges to which were attached great responsibilities. The ground of their condemnation is their unfaithfulness to their national trust.

When we come to the parable of the sheep and the goats, with which the eschatological discourse of Jesus ends, the transition from the particular to the general, and from the temporal to the eternal becomes so marked that many regard it as "barren of any particular

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notes of time or place.” But that is going too far. It is undoubtedly connected with what was to take place at the *parousia*, but regards the judgment work of Christ as one and continuous, and points out the principle upon which it is conducted in every age and in every world.

Christ is represented as judging “the nations”; that is, the Gentiles as distinguished from the Jews; and as separating them, upon the ground of the possession or absence of a divinely human love expressed in deeds of merciful kindness, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. *That* judgment, begun at the second advent, is now going on; and, wonderful to tell, everywhere is Christ’s criterion of character being accepted as supreme, his judgment as final, and its issues as eternal.

A GENERAL SURVEY

From a general survey of the synoptical Gospels we learn:

IN THE SYNOPTICAL GOSPELS

1. *That Jesus spoke of his second coming as near.* He clearly intimated that it was to take place during the lifetime of some of those who were listening to him. "Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16. 28). To the same effect are his words: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished" (Matt. 24. 34). It is not possible for language to be more explicit. Yet, strange to say, these plain and unequivocal statements have been stretched so as to cover a period of time to be measured by centuries. To such straits have many allowed themselves to be brought by refusing to accept the obvious inference that the second coming of Christ is a thing of the past rather than of the future.

2. *That Jesus identified his coming with the coming of his kingdom.* His

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coming was to be both personal and dispensational—something to be established within the soul, and something to be embodied in the world's institutions. Having received for himself a kingdom—whose scepter is the cross—he was to return and set it up in the hearts of men, and in the heart of the world's life. Concerned at first with personal conduct, his kingdom was to widen out so as to include every phase of man's complex social life and every part of the world-order.

3. *That the second coming of Christ was to be accompanied with certain visible signs.* When Jesus told his disciples that they were to see the Son of man coming in his kingdom, they at once asked him, "What *shall be* the sign of thy presence, and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24. 3, marginal reading.) His answer, in substance, was that the sign of his coming was to be found in the destruction of Jerusalem. Upon the principle that a sign is some-

IN THE SYNOPTICAL GOSPELS

thing outward and visible, whereas the thing signified is something inward and spiritual, the destruction of Jerusalem was to be the outward sign of a spiritual event. In mighty convulsions which are compared to the eclipse of the sun, the blotting out of the moon, and the falling of the stars from heaven, that great city, which was at once the religious and political center of the Jewish nation, was to be razed to the ground, and upon its ruins was to be built up the larger city of a new humanity, ruled and controlled by the Spirit of Christ.

The passing of the old and the effete is always necessary to the coming in of the new. That is the deeper significance of much of the fearful destruction which has taken place in the war-cursed countries of Europe. Thrones and dynasties have been swept away; institutions hoary with antiquity have been ground to powder; monuments of a past, whose glory had faded, have been battered into heaps of ruins. Outward

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things have perished that the things of spiritual value might take their place. At such a fearful price is progress won.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST IN THE APOSTOLIC WRITINGS

“THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES”

LUKE, the beloved physician, begins his history of the early church—“The Acts of the Apostles”—by describing the ascension of Jesus. He tells how a cloud received him out of the sight of his wondering disciples. He tells likewise of two men who stood by them in shining apparel, who said, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye behold him going into heaven” (Acts 1. 10, 11). This text is generally supposed to close the case in behalf of a physical and vis-

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ible second coming of Christ, but what it really teaches is the unbroken identity of Christ. The same Jesus who went up out of the earth-life was to come back again unchanged in all the essential elements of his nature.

A very unnecessary difficulty has been introduced by translating the Greek phrase *hon tropon*, "in like manner." What it really denotes is not *mode* but *certainty*; and that is unquestionably its meaning in every other instance in which it is used in the New Testament. There are in all six other instances in which the expression *hon tropon* is used in the New Testament, namely, Matt. 23. 37; Acts 7. 28; 2 Tim. 3. 8; Acts 15. 11; Jude v. 7; Acts 27. 25, and in none of them can it possibly be construed in a modal sense. As an example of the whole, take the Saviour's words in Matt. 23. 37: "How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." Does anyone for

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a moment suppose that those words indicate the outward form in which our Lord was to gather spiritual wanderers to himself? Bearing in mind the universally conceded principle of interpretation, that no rendering of any particular word or phrase is to be accepted unless it applies equally to every instance in which it is found, a candid and unbiased study of all the texts in which *hon tropon* occurs can hardly fail to show conclusively that it refers not to the manner of Christ's coming or going, but to the certainty that he would return essentially unchanged from what he was before his ascension. Dr. Milton S. Terry catches the writer's thought when he remarks, "The angels did not even say to those who saw Jesus ascend that they should behold his return, but they simply assured them that as surely as Jesus had gone into heaven, even so should he come again from heaven." The same Jesus, their unchanging Lord and Saviour, was to return as surely as

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he had gone up; and in his perpetual presence they were perpetually to rejoice.¹

A discussion of this classical text raises the whole question as to how Christ was to come. That the early Christians expected him to come in a visible and spectacular way, and to come soon, there cannot be the slightest doubt. But when it is maintained that the phrase *hon tropon* indicates the mode of his return, the insuperable objection confronts us that their expectation was not so fulfilled. Nor after the lapse of centuries has the anticipated event taken place. None of the apostolic group that saw Jesus go up witnessed his visible return. One by one they died without the sight. And one of the most pathetic chapters in church history consists of the records of oft-repeated attempts to fix a date for the belated event. Evidently, there has been some

¹ For fuller discussion of this point see author's book entitled *The Presence*, pp. 109-113.

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serious mistake somewhere regarding what was promised, to account for that long succession of blighted hopes.

THE EPISTLES

When we come to the Epistles of Paul, Peter, James, and John, and to the other writings produced within the circle of apostolic influence, we find the general outlook upon this subject identical with that found in the Gospels.

1. *The attitude of all the apostolic writers was that of eager, confident expectancy.* That the Master they had loved and lost was to return to judge the world, wind up its affairs, and take his ransomed home, they never for a moment doubted. That they believed his coming would be speedy and sudden, utterances like the following clearly testify: "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5. 1). "This I say, brethren, the time is shortened henceforth" (1 Cor. 7. 29, margin). "The night is far spent, and

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the day is at hand" (Rom. 6. 13: 12). "Exhorting *one another*; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh" (Heb. 10. 25).

"For yet a very little while,
He that cometh shall come, and shall not
tarry." (Heb. 10. 37.)

"The coming of the Lord is at hand" (James 5. 8). "Behold, the judge standeth before the door" (James 5. 9). "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer" (1 Pet. 4. 7). "Little children, it is the last hour" (1 John 2. 18). And when at the close of the book of Revelation the risen Christ exclaims, "Yea: I come quickly," his waiting church responds, "Amen; come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22. 20).

On this point, Dr. James Denney, one of the most conservative and careful Christian scholars, has these weighty words: "There can be no question that the primitive church generally cherished

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a fervent hope of the speedy return of Jesus, in the clouds of heaven. There can be just as little question that it supported that hope by appealing to the words of Jesus himself. Further, there can be no question that the hope, in the form in which it was cherished, proved fallacious. It was not fulfilled." Nor after the lapse of well-nigh two millenniums has any such event taken place. To say that for that reason it must now be drawing near is to juggle with words; for, as Archbishop Trench has pointed out, it cannot be that Jesus desired each succeeding generation to believe that he would certainly return in their day, as that would imply "that the faith and practice of all generations except the last would be founded upon a misapprehension."

Regarding the time of his coming they could not possibly have been mistaken; for, although its exact date was unknown, its nearness was announced in language clear as a sunbeam. The only

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conclusion, therefore, to which we can come is that he actually returned according to promise, but in "another form" from that in which they were expecting him; that, in other words, he came not in outward bodily form, but in his spiritual presence, in which form he is now with us.

2. *The coming of Christ was looked upon as an event of transcendent glory.* Jesus himself had promised that he would come "in his own glory," and "in the glory of the Father." Taking his words literally, his disciples looked for some unwonted display of outward glory which would confound his enemies and comfort his people. In the darkening days of tribulation preceding the second advent, Peter admonished his fellow Christians thus: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but inso-much as ye are partakers of Christ's

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sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4. 12). He also speaks of himself as "a witness of the sufferings of Christ" and "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (1 Pet. 5. 1). Again, addressing his fellow Christians, he says, "Now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold that perisheth, though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation [or unveiling] of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1. 6). Paul counsels Timothy to "keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing [literally, "the epiphany"] of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6. 14). Likewise he exhorts Titus to keep "looking for the blessed hope and appearing [literally, "the outbreking," or "outbursting"] of the glory of the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2. 13).

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It is clear that what they looked for and longed for was some sudden out-flashing of the glory of Christ, which would be overwhelming in its effect. But nothing of the kind ever came. Instead they received something infinitely better—a vision of Christ's glory that appealed not to the senses, but to the soul; such a vision as may be ours to-day.

In the dark days through which we are now passing we have the same reason to rejoice with exceeding joy in the certainty of the revelation of the glory of Christ that is coming: a glory which is to be more and more manifested as the centuries roll by; a glory which is to break forth at the end of this age in unimagined splendor; a glory in which this earth is to be transfigured; a glory which is to be consummated in the heavenly realm. But let us beware of falling into the mistake of the first Christians in expecting his glory to shine forth in outward spectacular ways rather than in

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the supremacy of spiritual forces controlled by him for the vanquishment of evil, and for the building up of the kingdom of righteousness.

CHAPTER IX

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

THAT the book of Revelation is prophetic in its character is a claim which the writer himself makes when he speaks of "the words of the prophecy of this book" (22. 18). It is an unveiling of the unseen, an opening of the seven-sealed mysteries of the future. Fortunately, we are not required to draw upon our imagination for an interpretation of this wonderful book. The key that unlocks its treasures hangs on the door. That key is found in the opening words—"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, *even* the things which must shortly come to pass." In these words the book explains itself.

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1. *It is a revelation given by God, through the glorified Christ, to his servant John.* Things were unveiled to John of the eagle eye, which from others were hidden. On a certain, never-to-be-forgotten Lord's Day, when "in the spirit," that is, when in a state of spiritual ecstasy, there came to him a sudden and startling vision of eternal things, by which he was carried along from one scene to another until its message was completed. To the soul of this solitary exile were revealed things which the outward eye sees not and the outward ear hears not. The future was disclosed to him; and what is still more important, heaven was opened, and its close connection with this lower world, and the availability of its illimitable resources for Christ's persecuted people made known.

2. *It is a revelation given through John to certain churches.* When the spirit came upon him, he says, "I heard behind me a great voice, as of a

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trumpet saying, What thou seest, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches" (Rev. 1. 10, 11). His message had, in the first instance, a local application, as all prophetic messages have. It was to be given to the seven churches in Asia Minor, which he names. These churches were selected not because of their importance, but because of John's intimate connection with them as their presiding bishop; perhaps also because of their representative character. But the message, although limited at first in its application, has in it universal elements, and is for all who can receive it. A suggestion of this wider application is found in the refrain, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

3. *It is a revelation of the kingly power and glory of the risen, living, and exalted Christ.* It is difficult to understand the position of Luther, who called the book of Revelation "a dumb proph-

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ecy," and said that Christ could neither be learned nor recognized in it. Christ is its central figure; but no longer is he the Man of Sorrows, despised and rejected of men; he has become the Judge, the Avenger, the Mighty Conqueror. He is seen "coming in his kingdom." On his head are many crowns. Once he had been scornfully rejected by the people, who shouted, "The Crucified! May his name and memory be blotted out." Now everything is changed, and he is looked upon as one who possesses invincible power. Not satisfied with acting upon the defensive, he takes the offensive, coming forth "conquering and to conquer" (Rev. 6. 2). We hear the trumpet sounding to battle as he puts himself at the head of the hosts of righteousness, riding upon a white horse; we see opposing forces scattered before him like chaff on the summer threshing floor; we see his enemies bowing their necks to his authority; we see his kingly reign everywhere acknowledged.

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4. *It is a revelation of things about to come to pass.* It was never meant to give a panoramic view of a long course of events extending through many centuries—a history of the church written in advance. The idea of the imminence of the events which it portrays is declared again and again. They are “things which must shortly come to pass” (1. 1); or, more literally, “things which are about to come to pass”; “things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter” (1. 19); that is, things which are to come to pass in the immediate future. John is told that he is not to seal up “the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand” (22. 10); that is, the time of fulfillment. To take these expressions and stretch them over a long and indefinite period of time is simply to juggle with words. It is to make of Scripture a nose of wax which may be twisted into any shape. The terms “shortly,” “quickly,” “at hand” mean

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within a brief period, and they can mean nothing else.

5. *It is a revelation of the things about to come to pass in connection with the coming of Christ.* The return, or second coming of Christ, in which all the hope of the early church was bound up, was looked upon as near.

In the Epistles of Paul to the Thesalonians, which were probably the first New Testament documents ever written, it is described as at hand; in the synoptical Gospels it is stated that it will surely happen within the life of some of those then living; in the book of Revelation the time of that great event has arrived. The heavens are about to open, and the Lord is about to descend to judge the world, and to establish his Messianic kingdom. This is the fundamental thought in the book; namely, the personal and speedy return of the conquering Christ.

The question to be faced is, Did Christ keep his promise? Did he de-

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scend in mighty power as he had promised, and as his people expected him to do? How can we doubt it?

6. *It is a revelation of the speedy coming of Christ for the deliverance of his people.* To understand this book we must consider its historical background. It was written at a time of peculiar distress; a time of fearful portents in the physical world; a time of earthquakes and pestilences; a time of wars and rumors of wars; a time of political convulsions; a time of the bitterest and cruelest persecution, From the time of the burning of Rome by Nero in A. D. 64, the Christian became the object of the most fiendish malignity. The emperor, in order to divert the minds of the people from himself as the perpetrator of that crime, fastened it upon the despised followers of Jesus. The hatred of the Roman people toward them knew no bounds. They were subjected to every torture which satanic ingenuity could devise. There seemed to be no

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possible end to their sufferings, except in extermination. Anything might happen; they lived in constant alarm; never knowing by what new danger they were to be confronted. The general condition of things is well described in the words, "The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind" (Rev. 6. 12, 13). Everything was shaken from its place; and the very foundations of the world's order seemed to be destroyed.

It was at such a time, when the hearts of men were failing them for fear, that the vision of the coming of the kingly Christ was given to comfort his afflicted and discouraged people. Their danger of apostatizing was great. Would they hold out? In view of the prevailing distress Jesus himself had asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18. 18).

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They were encouraged to "hold the fort" because reenforcements were on the way, and victory was nigh.

8. *It is a revelation of the fulfillment of Jewish Messianic hope.* The reign of righteousness and peace which in the Old Testament is ascribed to the Messiah, is here transferred to Christ. And as this great Christian drama draws to a close that kingdom of dreams is seen to be coming with increasing momentum. The two great powers that stood in its way, Judaism and pagan Rome, are judged and overthrown; and the New Jerusalem, the ideal city of God, is seen coming down to earth out of heaven. Coincident with this, great events are happening in the unseen realm. The saints who had fallen asleep before the *parousia* are raised up, and reign with Christ in glory. They cannot "die any more: for they are equal to the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20. 36). Those who come after them, as they pass out of

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the earth-life are raised up with them one by one, "every one in his own order." For them there is no weary waiting in a gloomy underworld. Instant death is instant glory. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. "And they shall reign with him for ever and ever."

Peculiar honor is paid those who in "the great tribulation" were faithful unto death. This was in accordance with the promise given, "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22. 28-30). It is to this class that John refers when he says, "I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, . . . and *I saw* the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and of the word of God, and such as worshiped not the

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beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead . . . ; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20. 4-6). The key to this perplexing passage is the word "souls." What John beheld was the *souls* of the martyred dead crowned with glory, honor, and immortality. They sat upon thrones, and judgment was given unto them. The period during which they shared the glory of Christ's advancing kingdom is said to be a thousand years. By this we are not to understand an exact measure of time. The expression is borrowed from rabbinical literature, and denotes a long and indefinite period, and is to be inter-

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preted in the light of such words as “a thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years.” The prophecy was of a long period of growing power. But the triumph of Christ’s kingdom was not to be unbroken. At the close of the millennium Satan is released from the bottomless pit, and makes a final assault upon the saints, when the fire of God consumes his army, and he is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Then comes the general resurrection, and a great white throne, upon which is seated One from whose face heaven and earth flee away. The dead, small and great, stand before the throne and are “judged every man according to their works.”

The ultimate goal, however, is not the New Jerusalem, but the heavenly Jerusalem, where we are to look for the full recompense of reward, and for the fulfillment of those hopes which are never brought to full fruition here; and in that transcendent vision “the roaring of the

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thunder dies away in litanies and psalms.”

“The book opened with the promise to reveal things which must quickly come to pass, and it goes out in the assurance that he, of whose coming all things are the prelude, is nigh at hand, even at the door” (C. Anderson Scott, in the New Century Bible).

CHAPTER X

A CHANGE OF VIEW

IT is a significant fact that the early disciples gradually came to change their view touching the nature of Christ's second advent. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians speaks of it as imminent and outward, whereas in his later epistles he speaks of it as inward and actual. Instead of expecting to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, he sought to meet him in his soul. He found himself in "a strait betwixt two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1. 23), which was far better than continuing the fight; for while at home in the body he was absent from the Lord; and to be with the Lord was the essence of his early advent hope. That hope he never surrendered; but simply transferred its

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consummation to the other world—just as we do—expecting at death instantly to pass from the veiled to the unveiled presence of his Lord. This change of attitude can be accounted for on no other ground than that the disciples corrected their early mistake; but instead of the change shattering their faith in Jesus it put it upon a firmer footing. Never did they feel so sure of him as when they knew him after the spirit, as their unseen but ever-present Companion and Friend.

Very naturally, the tense waiting which had continued with the disciples until Pentecost, then came to an end. Confident that the Lord was with them, what they henceforth longed for and prayed for was a clearer manifestation of his presence.

CHAPTER XI

TESTIMONY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL TO THIS CHANGE

WHEN we turn to the Fourth Gospel we find ourselves in a new atmosphere. Its conception of the second advent is completely changed, not only from that found in the book of Revelation but also from that found in the first three Gospels; for whereas in the first three Gospels it is referred to as a hope, the Fourth Gospel refers to it as an experience. Regarding this change Dr. Denney remarks: "The most important thing about the second advent in the New Testament is that in its dated and spectacular form it disappears. The last of our Gospels, which is ascribed not only by uniform Christian tradition but by its own unequivocal testimony, to the disciple whom Jesus loved, has

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nothing to say of it. It was written when the church not only had known, but, in this great spirit at least, had outlived all embarrassments about the delay of the advent. The eschatological hopes of the early Gospels are not simply omitted by John; they are replaced. Instead of the apocalyptic discourses of Jesus, as at the close of Matthew and Mark, we have the intimate discourses of the upper room. Instead of the coming of the Son of man on the clouds of heaven, we have the coming of the Spirit." For this change no satisfactory reason can be given save that the events described in the eschatological discourses of the synoptical Gospels had passed into history, Jesus having returned and become a living reality in the hearts of his people, and an unseen, recreative force in the life of the world.

For the transfer from the outward and palpable to the inward and spiritual, Jesus sought beforehand to prepare

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his disciples. This is the evident purpose of such utterances as the following: "I will not leave you desolate, I come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more, but ye behold me; because I live ye shall live also" (John 14. 18, 19). "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful. Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father" (John 14. 27, 28). "If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14. 23). "Ye therefore now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh away from you" (John 16. 22). In these words the Lord distinctly promises to answer the hopes he had awakened in another way from that which is palpable to the senses. His coming was to be spiritual. The three marks by

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which it was to be distinguished were "omnipresence, inwardness, and permanence." It was to carry its own evidence that "the Eternal Christ, who had passed into the unseen, is still present to his people as truly as when he dwelt among them in the flesh" (E. F. Scott). And may we not venture the forecast that now that the great cataclysm of war is over, we shall pass from the apocalyptic experience of synoptists to the deeper inner experience of the Fourth Gospel, and that the Lord, who has been coming in the clouds, with thunder and lightning, will come again in the sunshine, with a voice of gentle stillness? And in that happier day, in this age of fulfillment, as we rejoice in the presence of a Christ who has returned, and who is seeking to make his home in our hearts, and to incarnate himself in the life of the world, let us not forget that we are still to wait for his manifestation in the future; joining with all his people in the prayer, "Come,

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Lord Jesus"—a prayer that voices the continual longing of the heart for the coming One who can dry our tears, heal the hurt of our hearts, overthrow the kingdom of evil, and bring in the universal kingdom of righteousness and peace.

PART II
IMPLICATIONS AND
APPLICATIONS

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

FROM the foregoing study of the New Testament teaching concerning the second advent we deduce the following conclusions:

1. *That Christ Having Returned, According to Promise, Is Now Here in All the Fullness of His Redeeming Power*—here to heal, to comfort, and to save. Therefore the object of Christian hope is no longer the coming of a Christ who is absent, but the manifestation in kingly power and glory of a Christ who is present; for one who is with us *always* cannot by any possibility be conceived of as coming, except in the sense that some clearer outshining of his presence may yet be given. And for that we are eagerly to look; blending into one the new watchword of this “age of the pres-

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ence," "The Lord is come," and the old watchword of the early church, "The Lord cometh," the two being by no means exclusive the one of the other.

It is a pathetic thing when the fact of Christ's real presence is practically denied and the lament is heard:

"Jesus, my All, to heaven is gone,
He whom I fixed my hopes upon";

as if he were *there* and not *here*, and all that can be done is to wait patiently for his return. Those who think and speak thus of him are mistaken. He can be *here* and *there* at the same time; within the veil interceding for us, and down here in the thick of the struggle "working with us." What is needed by many Christians is a larger Christ, a Christ who because he is divine is everywhere present.

Jesus taught us to pray to our Father *in heaven*; but when we think of our Father as in heaven, does that exclude the possibility of his being with us here

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on the earth? By no means. Heaven is his throne, earth his footstool. He is as much in heaven as he is on earth, as much on earth as he is in heaven. With an infinite being, space is obliterated. A divine Father must needs be an omnipresent Father, and a divine Christ an omnipresent Christ. The main objection, therefore, to the idea of a corporeal coming of Christ as the only one possible is that it overlooks the doctrine of his proper divinity.

Those who in this Christian age are still looking for a local and visible coming of Christ are in the same mental attitude as the Jews at the time of the first advent, who persisted in looking for a Messiah who had actually come. Their Messiah stood among them, but they knew him not, just as to-day the Christ, whom many regard as absent, is standing by their side, yet they know it not. Alas, the pity of it!

2. That the Real and Abiding Presence of Christ Is the Culminating Fact

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in the Doctrine of the Second Coming. *Parousia* means "presence," and nothing else. A distinct event in the past, it is also something continuous throughout all time. "It is not," as Dr. David Smith correctly remarks, "a remote contingency, but an ever-present reality, not complete, but begun," something into the enjoyment of which we are now to enter.

The picture of the second advent as it is presented in the New Testament in its entirety is that of the approach of one who is at a distance. He draws near, and still nearer; at length he arrives, and is permanently present. In the first stage of the divine approach the word used is *erchomai*, as in the text, "My Lord delayeth his coming" (Luke 12. 45). In the final stage the word used is *parousia*, which always means "presence," or "being alongside," as in the marginal readings of the following texts: "*What shall be the sign of thy PRESENCE?*" (Matt. 24. 3); "*Be patient*

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therefore, brethren, until the PRESENCE of the Lord" (Jas. 5. 7). "*The power and PRESENCE of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Pet. 1. 16). "*When is the promise of his PRESENCE?*" (2 Pet. 3. 4). The same transition from "coming" to "presence" took place in the experience of the disciples; so that Dr. Jowett has the best of reasons for saying that "the habitual thought of the first Christians was not so much a coming as a presence." And it is in this final faith that the Christian world ought now to stand. To the presence of Christ, Christian experience testifies. Many know that the Lord is here, for the good reason that they have met him, and communed with him. He has been their abiding companion throughout the years. They have taken home to their hearts his promise; "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age" (margin); and they have reasoned that if he was with his people down to the end of the Jewish age, he will be with them to the end of

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every succeeding age. Instead of mourning over an absent Christ, they listen with palpitating hearts to the words, "I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14. 18, 19). In the fact of his presence as Lord and Ruler of his church they ever rejoice, basing their faith upon the declaration, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18. 20).

3. *That Christ Is Personally Present, and Not Representatively Merely.* It is not the whole truth to say that he is present in the Holy Spirit, for his presence is just as real as that of the Holy Spirit, and is much more in evidence, inasmuch as it is the special province of the Holy Spirit to reveal him to us.

The superficial remark so often heard, that the second coming of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit are

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one, shows how confused are the prevailing ideas regarding the relation existing between Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the revealer of Christ to men. He takes the things of Christ and interprets them to us. In his coming the coming of Christ is realized. The one accompanied the other, the coming of the Spirit being the means by which the spiritual coming of Christ was made real in consciousness and effective in character. In purpose and aim the two comings are referred to in the Fourth Gospel interchangeably; but while identical in purpose and aim, they differ as an agent differs from a principal, a revealer from a revelation, and one who is sent from one who sends him.

As Christ the divine *Logos*, or Word, is the revelatory side of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, "the giver of life," is the operative side. The one is God in manifestation, the other is God in action; the point at which they unite is in their joint effort to bring salvation to

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the souls of men. They are spoken of as two Comforters or Advocates, standing by the side of man, and uniting forces in maintaining his cause. Their work is one and inseparable. Hence in every future coming of Christ into his rightful place of world-sovereignty the Holy Spirit will have a part. Any fresh outpouring of the Spirit will mean a new grip by Christ upon the hearts of men, or increase of his power over men, a fuller recognition of his authority as the Lord of the conscience and as the true monarch of men. It will mean, in short, a real coming of Christ.

4. *That Christ Is Spiritually Present, and Not Merely Present "in Spirit."* These two positions are radically different. To say that Christ is present with us *in spirit*, as we might be present with some friend at a distance, is to fall short of the truth. He is actually with us in his spiritual presence—just as he was with Nathanael when he met him under the fig tree's shade.

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That his spiritual presence can be just as real and personal as his bodily presence; that his revelation to faith can be just as real and personal as his revelation to the senses, is one of the things which those who are stuck in the mire of literalism are slow to learn. But when we get to the bottom of it, personality is a spiritual rather than a bodily quality. • The body is not the true and abiding person, but only the changing organism in which he is expressed, and through which he acts. What the instrument upon which he plays is to the musician, that is the body to the spirit. Bodies change; spirits maintain their identity.

The form under which Jesus may appear to us in the future is, after all, a secondary matter. The truth that brings comfort is that the Lord in whom we trust will remain unchanged through all the changes in his outward manifestation; and that whatever disclosures of his wonderful personality may await us

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in the future, it will be the same Jesus of gospel story and of personal experience that will come to us in whatever guise he may appear.

5. *That Any Future Approach of Christ to Man Must Be Upon the Plane which he Now Occupies.* And that plane is undoubtedly the spiritual one.

Were he to come into the physical world to meet men on the physical plane once more, then, as a matter of course, he would come again in the physical body in which he tabernacled when on earth. This is the view which most pre-millenarians hold. Against it reason revolts, because it contravenes the principle of development inherent in the very nature of things, and explicitly laid down in the words of Scripture, "that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15. 46).

There are others who contend that the body in which Jesus is to reappear is his spiritual, or post-resurrection, body, in

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which he ascended. Support for that view has been sought in the theory of Luther concerning the ubiquity of Christ's spiritual body. But a body of any kind must necessarily occupy limited space, although we can imagine Christ's spiritual body as almost ubiquitous, and as being able to manifest itself at London one moment, and at New York the next, and also to make itself visible or invisible at will. Still, it would be limited in its power of manifestation, besides being perceptible to those only who are possessed of spiritual vision. Furthermore, it would be upon a different plane from that which we mortals now occupy, and hence would fail to bring us into the most perfect relation with our Lord.

To put the matter as succinctly as possible: Christ is now in heaven in his spiritual body, he is present on earth in his divine nature; *there* he is visible, *here* he is invisible; *there* he is an object of sight, *here* he is an object of faith.

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When we pass out of this earth-life we go from his veiled to his unveiled presence. And since we pass out not unclothed, but clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, we meet him on his own plane. Spiritual body with spiritual body meet in perfect accord. With our new power of spiritual vision we see him as he is, and, changed by glorifying grace, resemble him we see.

Being with Christ, and seeing him as he is within the sphere of complete manifestation, constitutes the experience in which the original hope of the *parousia* finds its higher fulfillment; for that was the very essence of the early Messianic hope. Into this definite expectation Christian faith has permanently crystallized, as in the last words of Tennyson:

“I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.”

Or as in the dramatic words of Browning:

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“O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee. A Man
like to me,
Thou shalt love, and be loved by forever.
A Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gate of new life to thee.
See the Christ stand!”

Utterances like these, which might be multiplied indefinitely, show how trustingly the parting promise of our Lord, “I come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, *there* ye may be also” (John 14. 4), has been accepted. In this aspect of his coming, at least, we all are agreed.

6. *That the Christ Is Now Here Carrying to Completion the Work He Began in the Days of His Flesh.* One of the main objections to the premillennarian view is that it undervalues the activity of Christ from “the day in which he was received up,” and centers all its hopes upon what he is to do in the future. It cheapens the efficiency of his atoning sacrifice, making it a failure in

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the accomplishment of the end which it was designed to serve. Despairing of the salvation of the world through the operation of moral forces, it expects it to come through some outward display of power and glory. In this it is unevangelical, for, as it has been aptly said, "The cross means nothing unless it be reliance upon spiritual forces as against physical" (J. W. Buckham).

But the cross is no failure. It is through all time the power of God unto salvation. What it can do for one soul it can do for a world of sinners. In the book of Revelation Christ as the slain Lamb is represented as going forth conquering and to conquer. What the book says over and over again is that "this present Christ is to prevail completely by his cross. Everywhere we hear the prophecy of the speedy victory" (J. A. Geissinger).

Silently and secretly Christ is working out his saving purpose. He himself compares his kingdom to leaven, which

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works in the dough from particle to particle until the whole lump is leavened; and to the mustard seed, which from a small beginning grows into a spreading tree, taking on external form, and expressing itself in human laws, customs, and institutions. His kingdom is *in* this world, but it is not *of* it. It does not come with outward pomp and show, and may be unrecognized except by those whose eyes have been anointed to perceive the working of spiritual forces.

While the age-long struggle between good and evil continues, Christ does not stay in a distant heaven, allowing evil to go on unchecked, until there is a great catastrophe, after which he will interfere. He is ever at work. Of this redemptive activity there can be no end until its object has been obtained, for he must needs keep on working until the fruit of his earthly sacrifice has been reaped and the travail of his soul has been satisfied.

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7. *That the Saving Power of the Hidden Christ Is Being Increasingly Displayed.* The question is often raised, Is the world growing better or worse? The answer is, Both. Its lights are brighter, its shadows are deeper; the struggle within it of contending forces grows more intense. Yet in spite of the tendency of things to slip back after they have been put right, necessitating the doing over again the work of reform, no one can deny that substantial progress has been made. The world has been compared to an inverted arch bending downward to the coming of Christ, then taking an upward curve which it never altogether loses.

One of the most pitiful examples of the way in which a text may be twisted from its true meaning to bolster up a false theory concerning the present-day drift of things is furnished in the use made of our Lord's question: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find

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faith on the earth?" (Luke 18. 8.)

The assumption that this text implies a practical fading out of faith before the end of the Christian age is perfectly groundless. In using these words Jesus was not thinking of the end of the Christian age at all, but of the end of the Jewish age, which was near at hand, and he asks: "In view of the fearful persecutions about to break upon the infant church, will my people weather the storm? When the Son of man returns will he find them loyal to the faith?" He has just assured them that when they cried to him out of the depths of their trouble he would "avenge them speedily"; then he adds, "Nevertheless, when I come will I find you staunch and true?" A very different thing from saying that after his gospel had been in operation for many generations he would come into a world in which faith had become well-nigh extinct. A greater travesty upon Christ's words, and a greater slight upon the value of

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his age-long work, can hardly be imagined.

The man is blind who does not see in the present-day quickening of the social conscience, and in the evident endeavor of religion to find social expression, signs of the progressive coming of Christ. More and more *his* spirit is dominating our social life. In every movement of social progress he plays the major part. It was his nail-pierced hand that struck the shackles from four million American slaves. It is his hand that is breaking in pieces like a potter's vessel the colossal iniquity of the liquor traffic. It is his hand that has smitten into the dust the brutal, boastful, God-defying power of Germany. In the fierce struggle for democracy which is now in progress it is the prevalence of his spirit that will lead to the actualization of brotherhood, of which democracy is but the political counterpart. Every moral gain which the war will bring will mean the coming

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of Christ into a place of greater power. His name will be above every name.

One thing which can be set down as beyond dispute is that in any future coming of Christ spiritual forces will be supreme. To bring his coming down to the level of that of an earthly potentate, and to fix the place of his residence in some earthly city, is to change the nature of his conquering power from moral to physical, and to strip him of all the spiritual grandeur that the world has been wont to associate with his name. But not in that way will he show himself—of that we may be sure. Glorious things are spoken of him. His second coming was something more than a fulfillment of prophecy; it was in itself the prophecy of better things to come, for he always works upon an enlarging scale. What he does in one age is a forecast of better things to be done in the next. With him it is always true that “the best is yet to be.”

Because Christ is at work a moral aim

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is discernible in every political, social, and industrial revolt, and a worth-while moral end in every movement for human betterment. We have no reason to fear the issue with omnipotent love upon the throne. Startling things, staggering to faith, will happen in the future, as they are happening to-day; but with every crisis a new upward process will begin. Through every revolution will come a new evolution; through catastrophe will come conversion; through judgment will come salvation.

8. *That the Presence of the Indwelling Christ Is to Be Increasingly Manifested.* But in what ways, who can tell? When Saint John at the beginning of his book of Revelation declared, "Every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him" (1. 7), he must have been speaking of his outward, physical manifestation in the hyperbole of an Oriental, or of such an unveiling of his hidden glory as would convince behold-

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ers of his transcendent claims, and bring them in penitence to his feet. But the universal visualizing of himself upon the physical plane would be a sheer impossibility. And there is no more pathetic illustration of the puerility to which unrestrained literalism may descend than the attempts of premillenarian expositors to show how the pictorial and symbolical words of John may be explained after a physical fashion.

To see the Lord in his moral majesty needs anointed eyes. The carnal eye can see only carnal things. That which is spiritual is spiritually discerned. The words spoken by Jesus to his disciples on the eve of his departure, "A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me" (John 16. 16), evidently mean, "A little while, and ye behold me no more with your bodily eyes; and again a little while, and ye shall see me with the eyes of the soul." To the same effect are the words, "Yet a little while, and the

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world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me" (John 14. 19). How that precious promise of his immediate unveiling to his own could ever have come to be interpreted to mean that he would come again many centuries hence, in a way visible to the senses, passes comprehension.

When we see a friend outwardly we do not see his real self. The multitude that surged after Jesus in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, asking, "Who is this?" would be duplicated again were he to reappear in the streets of Jerusalem to-day. But there were those who saw *Him*—the real, divine Christ. The aged Simeon saw him, when he saw the world's Redeemer in the babe in Mary's arms; the penitent thief saw him when he saw the King of all kingdoms in the thorn-crowned man crucified by his side. Others saw him, when they saw the Lord of Glory in the one who was despised and rejected of men. Nothing short of the revelation of his moral

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majesty will bring about that consummation when "to him every knee shall bow," and every tongue confess his lordship to the glory of God the Father; and nothing short of that will be a real coming.

9. *That the Unseen Christ Is the World's True King.* The hope of the first advent was expressed in the words, "Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19. 38); but it was as a temporal king that the Jewish people expected him to come. With wild hosannas they hailed him, exclaiming, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel" (John 12. 13). This idea of an earthly king the early Christians transferred to his second advent; and from it they had great difficulty in getting away. A king who was to rule in righteousness, whose only sword was to be the sword of truth; whose only scepter was to be the scepter of love, was an ideal so different

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from the one which they had been taught to cherish that it was hardly possible to grasp it at first; but gradually it percolated into their minds, and when fully realized they came under its spell of liberating and inspiring influence.

The thought that Christ's kingship is to take on this outward form has led to the conclusion that he is still uncrowned, and that his reign is being postponed to some distant day when he shall return through the cloven skies. But such a conception is utterly foreign to all that is taught concerning the nature of Christ's *parousia*. He is now a king—a true king, “the King of kings and Lord of lords.” His royal rule is now going on. No one wields greater power than he. By virtue of the royalty of his nature, by virtue of the claims of his cross, he is wielding supreme power. All authority has been given unto him in heaven and on earth; and although his rule is not always obeyed, nor always

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acknowledged, it is not on that account any the less real.

“The invisible King” for whom men like H. G. Wells are blindly and passionately searching, is to be found in Christ. To see him as “the King eternal, immortal, and invisible,” “the everlasting king,” “the king of ages,” is to make the great discovery. It is to find a competent Ruler upon the throne of the universe. It is to see in the mighty religious, social, and political upheavals now taking place “the Son of man coming to his kingdom.” It is to feel sure of the future whatever may betide, because at the center of the world’s complex life is seen “in the midst of the throne a Lamb standing, as it had been slain” (Rev. 5. 6)—the symbol of that mediatorial reign now in progress, of which there shall be no end.

10. *That the Second Coming of Christ Marks an Advance from the Outward to the Spiritual, and from the Limited to the Universal, in Religion.*

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And in these two directions all religious progress moves. It is here that we see the spiritual bearings of the destruction of Jerusalem. So long as Jerusalem stood, a fatal arrest was put upon the expanding spirit of Christianity. Jerusalem was the center of a national religion, narrow, intense, and intolerant. Its worship was largely a thing of outward forms, and gendered to bondage. With the new faith it was in irreconcilable antagonism; and not until it was overthrown, and plowed under, could the seed of a spiritual and universal religion have a chance to grow.

This the early Christians did not appreciate at first. They fondly imagined that they could put the new wine into the old wine-skins; but by and by they saw that to be impossible, and as the desolating storm of judgment was seen to be rapidly approaching, they began to turn their thoughts and hopes from the city of their fathers to "the new Jerusalem which is from above," speak-

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ing of it as "*the city* which is to come" (Heb. 13. 14). Thus imperceptibly their vision widened, so that when the catastrophe came they found themselves standing upon distinctively Christian ground, freed from the shackles of Judaism, and looking upon Christianity not as a Jewish sect but as a world-wide religion.

To this broad ground the Master brings us when, in answer to the Samaritan woman, he says: "The hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . God is spirit [margin], and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4. 21, 24). This "hour" of spiritual enfranchisement which Jesus says, "cometh and now is," indicates what took place when the view of his *parousia*, among his followers, changed from a corporal to a spiritual *presence*, and from a *presence* local and limited to one universal and perpetual.

In this present day we find the same

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movement still going on towards the spiritual and the universal. A religion of forms is at a discount; grace is recognized to be mightier than law; the authority of the spirit is felt to be more binding than any authority externally imposed. Religion is breaking through all outward restrictions. From its national form it is passing to something wider; becoming the vital bond that is to unite the scattered members of humanity into a great, and growing, and organic whole.

11. *That the Second Coming of Christ Has Given a New Meaning and Value to the Lord's Supper.* When Paul said, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death *till he come*" (1 Cor. 11. 26), he was thinking of Christ's immediate coming, and not of his coming at the end of the world. After his coming the point of emphasis in this ordinance was to be changed from commemoration to communion. No longer was

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it to be merely the memorial of a dead Christ, but the means of fellowship with a living Christ. While keeping the memory of the Christ of Calvary green, and setting forth his death as the ground of human redemption, it was to stand for the fact of his "Real Presence," and was to be a festival of life rather than of death. As such it was to be an occasion of abounding joy. So long as the bridegroom was absent the children of the bridegroom might mourn and fast; but the Master himself asks, "How can the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?" (Mark 2. 15.) The bridegroom having returned, the church, his bride, is to arise from the dust, put on her beautiful garments, and shine in the reflected glory of her Lord.

12. *That by his Second Coming Jesus Has Brought to His People the Fullness of His Redemption.* Stupendous changes were brought into the unseen realm by that event. Regarding these little has been revealed; but among the

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scattered hints that have been given there is perhaps none more significant than that which speaks of Jesus going up on high "leading captivity captive," bringing deliverance to the pre-Christian saints, and opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers. When he returned it was to convert what was before a hazy hope into a blessed certainty. Since he conquered death and entered into his place of sovereignty in the unseen realm the whole aspect of death has been changed from one of gloom to one of glory. No longer is it a going *down*, or a going *out*, but a going *up*. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth." Why from *henceforth*? Because from the time of his conquest over death it is to those "who die in the Lord" the immediate entrance into glory. The Old Testament saints "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar" (Heb. 11. 13). The New Testament saints have all the

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promises of the past fulfilled in their experience; and all that heaven can hold in reserve for them is the continuation and intensification of what is already begun.

13. *That His Presence is the Pledge of the Final Triumph of Righteousness.* To him the eyes of men are turned as never before. To the consciousness of his presence the world is slowly awakening. In those days of agony through which we are passing the great fact of his presence is being burned into the souls of men. To him they are instinctively looking. The soldier wounded in battle fixes upon him his dying gaze; the mourning mother leans upon his everlasting arm; the inmates of the desolated home welcome him as the bringer of comfort. Because he is in the midst we can look upon a wrecked world in hope and not in despair; and where others can see only ruins we can see the rising walls of the better city yet to be. Great things are in store for a world that has Christ in it, for there is no end

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to what he can accomplish. His arm is not shortened so it cannot save. Progress may be hastened or delayed; the tide may ebb or flow, but through all changes the redeeming work of Christ will go on until its end has been attained.

It is the hope of the final triumph of righteousness that nerves our arm in the fight. We know that we are not engaged in a losing cause. On the other hand, the belief in an absentee and impotent Christ cannot fail to cut the roots of the present endeavor. It is freely admitted that many premillenarians are active Christian workers, but the logical effect of their doctrine is the slackening of effort in behalf of human betterment. If things are to go from bad to worse till Christ comes to turn the tide, why should anyone delay his coming? A recent writer of this school makes this confession. "For a number of years I took an active part in political and other organizations, having for their object reform movements, and was consider-

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ably exercised about making the world better. My views, however, in this matter have undergone a radical change. I now understand that this world that crucified our Lord is rejected of God, and it cannot be pleasing to him; that Christians are not commanded to engage in the work of reforming it; that it cannot be redeemed, but is rushing to its doom; that, on the other hand, our duty toward the citizens of the world is to preach the gospel to them, and to assist in calling out of the world a people for his name. And this duty seems all the more urgent in these last days, because the Christians are now especially called upon to separate themselves from the world and its institutions, which being under condemnation, are even now suffering judgment—a judgment which is to be more severe as the time passes.” From this frank avowal we see how it is that intense evangelistic zeal may be connected with indifference to social reform; the aim of Christian effort not be-

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ing to save the world—for the world is doomed—but simply to save something from the wreck.

To support this false position, reference is made to the text which speaks of the gospel as being preached “for a witness” before the end of the age. A witness to what? To God’s infinite grace of course. But to say that it is *not* to be preached for conversion is a travesty on Christ’s words.

The validity of a doctrine that leads to an attitude so utterly unchristian is discredited on the very face of it. One can hardly imagine a more sad perversion of Christ’s teaching than the employing of it to keep his people out of sympathetic touch with any enterprise which has for its object the uplifting of humanity; and that seeks to give a higher value to his future activity by discounting the worth of what he is doing to-day. It stands to reason that a correct interpretation of his words will give a heightened sense of the value of

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the human interests which have claimed his attention since he vanished from sight, and will bring his people into active cooperation with him in everything that tends to their realization.

Besides, the whole tenor of Christ's teaching shows that his expectation of the coming of his kingdom is founded upon the faithfulness of his followers. If this is not so, he has certainly been greatly misunderstood, and the prayers and labors of his people throughout the Christian centuries have been sadly misdirected. It has always been assumed that when he told his disciples to pray "Thy kingdom come," he led them to expect its immediate and progressive coming, rather than to look down through the long vista of the years for its coming as a distant event; that he encouraged them to look for immediate results, and to cherish the belief that every little effort they might put forth was giving a helpful touch to the coming of the kingdom. And even those to whom

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the kingdom was a thing of the future, entirely independent of their action, have generally, with blessed inconsistency, worked and prayed as if they had something to do with its coming, thus proving themselves to be better than their beliefs. The very fact that we are kept here, and not translated at once after conversion, shows that the Lord is not yet done with us, and that he has worth-while work for us to do; and the very fact that Christ is here shows that he is not yet done with the world for which he made the great sacrifice. The presence of one so wonderful holds in it the possibility of endless surprises, and of "a larger spiritual and social fulfillment" than we have ever dreamed of. His greatest wonders are held in reserve. Those whose faith is set on him have every reason to hope hard, and to cherish an optimistic outlook for the future. And if in these days of storm and stress, so like the days preceding the second advent, the church as a whole is

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still unready to receive him, he turns to the individual soul, saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3. 20). Within "the low lentel" of the heart that welcomes him is a place of peace what time the tempest rages. And, after all, a right attitude toward Christ is the essential thing. For what boots it what theory we may hold in regard to his future program if he is not to us a present reality? "Make sure of his advent into the heart," says Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, "then let him come again as he will, and when he will. Were he to appear visibly to-morrow in the sky, if he is not in my heart, he will be nothing to me—but my doom. But if he is in my heart, I have all that I need. Whatever else he may some day bring with him will be well and good." "He cannot come as a thief to me," says Dr. Alexander Whyte, "if I love his appear-

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ing. If you love me, you cannot come to me too soon." Wise then will we be, if instead of seeking to break open the seven-sealed mysteries of the future, we refuse even to crystallize the blessed hope that sings in our hearts into a hard, unyielding dogma, and bending ourselves to our allotted tasks, which nothing should be allowed to interrupt, are content to say with Susan Coolidge:

"I may not know, my God; no hand revealeth
Thy counsel wise;
Along the path a deepening shadow stealeth;
No voice replies
To all my questioning thoughts the time to
tell,
And it is well:

Let us keep on abiding and unfearing
Thy will always;
Through a long century's ripening fruition,
Or a short day's;
Thou canst not come too soon; and I can wait
If thou come late."

PART III

**A CATECHISM ON THE
SECOND COMING OF
CHRIST**

A CATECHISM ON THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

1. *How did Christ come the first time?*

He was "born of a woman" (Gal. 4. 4). "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1. 14).

2. *What did he say about his going away?*

"Yet a little while am I with you, and I go unto him that sent me" (John 7. 33).

3. *What did he say about his return?*

"I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me" (John 14. 18).

4. *How were the disciples to see him upon his return? With bodily or with spiritual eyes?*

Undoubtedly in the latter way.

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Those disciples who with their bodily eyes saw him go up never saw him again save with the eyes of their spirits.

5. *How did Paul see him after his return?*

He saw him miraculously, in his glorified body, so that as an eye-witness he might be qualified for the apostleship. By all others he was seen by faith, and not by sight. But the fact that Paul could say, "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" is conclusive proof that he was here to be seen.

6. *Is there any ground for the idea that the coming of Christ was to be outward and physical?*

None whatever. The only Christ the early Christians knew after his resurrection was a spiritual Christ. They said: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know *him so* no more" (2 Cor. 5. 16). And a spiritual Christ is the only one the world has known for well-nigh twenty centuries—the only one that it knows to-day.

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7. *What is the difference between Christ's first and second comings?*

By his first coming he was incarnated in a human body; by his second coming he is being incarnated in the whole body of humanity. For the idea of a fleshly re-incarnation there is not a single shred of support in holy writ.

8. *What did Jesus mean when he announced that he would come again in "this generation"?*

Precisely what he said. By this generation he undoubtedly meant his own generation; that is, the generation then existing. To get from the word "generation" the idea of "race," or "nation," one must put it upon the rack, and extort from it a meaning which it was never intended to convey. Those who are still looking for Christ to come are nineteen hundred years too late.

9. *Did he come according to promise?*

How can we doubt it? The word of glad assurance with which the New

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Testament closes, "Yea: I come quickly," has been kept; and the prayer, "Amen: come, Lord Jesus," has been answered.

10. *What is the inference to be drawn from the fact of his coming?*

It is that he is here. Cold comfort would it have given to these sorrowing disciples to have been told what Christ would do for them centuries hence. They needed a present Saviour; as all men in every age do.

11. *Is the old watchword of the early church, Maranatha, "The Lord cometh," applicable to the present?*

How can it be if the words of Christ are true: "Lo I am with you always." Our watchword ought now to be, "The Lord is come." Gladder words than these cannot be imagined. Let us shout them out that all the world may hear.

12. *Is it correct to identify the second coming of Christ with the coming of the Holy Spirit?*

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Assuredly not. The coming of the Holy Spirit was contemporaneous with the second coming of Christ, but not identical with it. The Holy Spirit is the agent by whom the presence of Christ was to be made real in human experience.

13. *Was there anything uncertain as to the time of Christ's second coming?*

The certain thing about it was its immediacy, the uncertain thing was its exact date. "Of that day and hour," said Jesus, "knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24. 36). It is not for us "to know times and seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority" (Acts 1. 7).

In all divine visitations there is always an element of surprise. Madness lies in the way of date-fixing.

14. *Why has the future been veiled?*

Lest what we see might dazzle or paralyze us. "The last day is hidden,"

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remarks Saint Augustine, "that every other day may be regarded."

15. *When did the early Christians expect Christ to return?*

There cannot be the shadow of a shade of doubt that they expected him to come *soon*. They spoke of his coming as "near," as "at hand," as "at the door," as "about to come to pass." Language could not possibly be more explicit.

16. *What mistake did the disciples make?*

They made no mistake about the time of his coming; what they mistook was the nature of it. They looked for him to come through the open skies instead of looking for him to come into their open hearts. This is the very mistake which many to-day are making.

17. *What was the effect upon them of this mistake?*

It paralyzed their spiritual energy, and cut the nerve of Christian endeavor. Paul had to rebuke the Thessalonians

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for gazing up into heaven and neglecting their daily duties.

18. *Did the disciples correct their mistake?*

Happily, they did. Gradually they passed over from the idea of a visible to that of an invisible coming, and settled down in the sweet assurance of his real and abiding presence, so that Peter said of them: "Whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Pet. 1. 8).

19. *What do we learn about the spiritual development of Saint Paul at this point?*

At the first he expected Christ to come to him; afterward he had "a desire to depart and be with Christ," for, said he, "it is very far better" (Phil. 1. 23). To be with Christ, and to see him as he is, was the essence of his advent hope, and this he retained through every change of thought and experience.

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20. *At what crisis in the history of the world did Christ say he would come—at “the end of the world”?*

No! a thousand times, No! That mis-translation of his words is responsible for much of the confusion that exists on the subject. He promised to come, not at the end of the world, but at “the end of the age,” namely, at the end of the Jewish age—the age then current. Did he come then? Most assuredly!

21. *Is it correct to speak of the destruction of Jerusalem as the second coming of Christ?*

Far from it. It was the outward sign of two great spiritual realities, namely, “the end of the age,” and the beginning of the “Presence.” That is to say, it was the sign that the Jewish age had ended, and that Christ had come to be forever present. With the destruction of Jerusalem the whole system of Judaism, which stood in the way of Christ’s spiritual kingdom, was swept away, thus allowing Christ to come to his own.

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22. *How are we to interpret the figurative language employed in describing the signs which were to accompany the second coming of Christ?*

Just as we interpret all other apocalyptic imagery. Take, for example, what is said about the destruction of Egypt and Babylon: "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a falling leaf from the fig tree" (Isa. 34. 4) ; and you have a key to the understanding of what is said regarding the destruction of Jerusalem.

23. *Why do we not find any reference in the Fourth Gospel to the signs which were to accompany the second advent?*

For the good reason that before that book was written the event which the signs heralded had itself taken place.

24. *Did any of the apostles live until after the Lord's return?*

Yes, John did. When the Master

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upon a certain occasion was telling Peter what the future held in store for him, Peter, pointing to John, asked: "What of this man?" Jesus answered: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee?" (John 21. 22), plainly intimating that John was to be alive at the time of the second advent; which was actually the case.

25. *What is the final word expressive of the second coming of Christ?*

It is the word *parousia*; which means "being present." This is the reading in the margin, and it is the only meaning the word will bear. The One who was coming arrived, and is now present.

The *parousia* has changed the second coming of Christ from a hope into an experience.

26. *What form should the advent hope now assume?*

Not the coming of a Christ who is absent, but the manifestation of a Christ who is present. This is the form suggested in the words: "Looking for the

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blessed hope, and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2. 13).

27. How is Christ to manifest himself?

In various ways. Inwardly to faith; outwardly in the world's institutional life; completely, in the vision that awaits his own within the veil.

28. In what ordinance of the Church is the real presence of Christ specially symbolized?

In the Lord's Supper. The early Christians supposed that their need of this ordinance would be brief. They expected to celebrate it till Christ came, when they were to be caught up to meet him in the air; but as that did not happen they continued to celebrate it in another way, making it a festival of communion rather than a festival of commemoration. This should be its chief significance to-day. At his own table Christ is host, and we are guests.

29. Upon which are we to put the em-

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phasis in the present day? Upon the Coming or upon the Presence?

Without doubt upon the latter. It is *with the Presence that we have now to do*. What the future will bring we can at the best only conjecture. The main thing will be missed if we allow our minds to be turned away from the unseen Friend and Helper who is ever at our side, and whose grace is sufficient for our every need.

30. *How are we to cultivate the sense of Christ's presence?*

By affirming it; and by "practicing" it.

31. *What if we have no realizing sense of it?*

Then should we fall back on the fact itself. The Lord is here, whatever we may think about it, or feel about it. To rest in this fact is to have our sorrow turned into joy, our weakness into strength, our night into day.

32. *What evidence have we that Christ has come?*

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The evidence is twofold. First there is the evidence of experience. Hosts of seeking souls have found him. Then there is the evidence which comes from the changes which have been wrought in the world—changes that cannot be explained apart from him. The evidence that he has come is the same as that by which the sun proves that it has risen.

33. How far does the Presence of Christ extend?

He is present everywhere: in heaven and on earth. To a Divine Being omnipresence belongs. He can be in every sphere at the same time. Hence he can be to all his creatures a present help.

34. When will the judgment work of Christ begin?

It has begun already. "Now is the judgment of this world." The judgment of Christ is continuous. It is a process ending in a crisis. Every age has its harvest at the end.

35. When is Christ to be King?

He is King now. He says: "All

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authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28. 18). Upon his return he received for himself a kingdom, and entered upon his kingly reign (Luke 19. 12). At his second coming he was to be seen "*coming in his kingdom*" (Matt. 16. 28).

It is therefore ours to acclaim his sovereignty and to

"Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown him Lord of all."

36. Of what is his kingly presence the pledge?

Of the triumph of his kingdom. "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15. 25). "Henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22. 69). That place of power he now occupies.

37. How is his kingdom to come?

Secretly and openly. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or,

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There! For lo, the kingdom of God is within you"—or "in the midst of you" (margin) (Luke 17. 20, 21). "Behold he cometh with clouds" (Rev. 1. 17).

38. *What did Jesus say about his coming to his people at death?*

"I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also" (John 14. 3). This is not the second coming, but it is a real coming nevertheless.

39. *What are the good things about premillenarianism?*

(1) Its Christward look. It fixes the thought of men upon the right object.

(2) Its expectant attitude. It expects great things from Christ. Its program of the future may be a mistaken one, but its sublime confidence in Christ's ability to carry it through is something to be commended.

40. *What are the objectionable things about it?*

(1) Its pessimism. It looks upon the world for which Christ died as going

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from bad to worse, and as tottering to its fall. (2) It destroys the social hopes by which all workers for the world's weal have been inspired. (3) It renders meaningless the prayer which the Master has put into our lips: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." (4) It puts the emphasis upon the idea of waiting for the Lord, instead of working with him. (5) It expects Christ to do it all, instead of having him fulfill his purpose, as he has always done, by securing the co-operation of his people. (6) It substitutes physical force for moral power—a thing which Jesus always refused to do. (7) It renders the life-long passion of our Lord, which culminated in the cross, of no avail in accomplishing the world's redemption; so that instead of seeing the travail of his soul and being satisfied he has to resort to other and inferior means for the vanquishment of evil and the establishing of his kingdom.

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41. *What is the natural effect of a living faith in the Lord's presence?*

It is sanctifying, inspiring, transforming. He came, "to be glorified in his saints" (2 Thess. 1. 10), that is, glorified in the transfiguration of their lives. If the hope of Christ's coming has an inspiring and ennobling effect, how much more the consciousness of his presence?

42. *What is its social effect?*

The destruction of evil. "The lawless one," who in the apostolic days was already at work, and who in our day is rampant, he "shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming" (2 Thess. 2. 8).

43. *What should be our attitude toward the ultimate issue of events in these eventful days through which we are now passing?*

It should be that of watchful waiting, of active participation, of glad expectancy, and of supreme confidence.

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Better answer to that question cannot anywhere be found than that given by his celestial visitor to Daniel when he was sorely perplexed concerning the mysteries of the future: "Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot, at the end of the days" (Dan. 12. 13). If things are in Christ's hands how can they fail to work out right?

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